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Message Text

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64
ACTION NEA-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 9370

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB PINT IS
SUBJ: RESIGNATION OF HISTADRUT GENERAL SECRETARY
YITSHAK BEN AHARON

SUMMARY. WITH HIS RESIGNATION AS HISTADRUT GENERAL SECRETARY NOV 18, YITSHAK BEN-AHARON MAY BECOME MORE VOCAL LEADER OF THE DOVES, ALTHOUGH LOSS OF PUBLIC PLATFORM AND EROSION OF SUPPORT AMONG AHDUT AVODAH COLLEAGUES IN LABOR PARTY MAY SERIOUSLY DIMINISH HIS POLITICAL INFLUENCE. END SUMMARY.

1. EXPECTED RESGINATION OF YITSHAK BEN-AHARON AS GENERAL SECRETARY OF HISTADRUT CAME NOVE 18 IN BITTER LETTER IN WHICH HE STATED THAT DECISION WAS FORCED UPON HIM--THAT HE WAS YIELDING TO LONG-STANDING PURGE CAMPAIGN BY ELEMENTS OF LABOR PARTY TO OUST HIM. HE DESCRIBED CONFLICT AS CAUSED BY THOSE WHO OPPOSED HIM IN HIS EFFORTS TO CARRY OUT HISTORICAL SOCIALIST-ZIONIST OBJECTIVES OF ISRAEL LABOR MOVEMENT.

2. UNKILE PREVIOUS OCCASIONS WHEN HE THREATENED TO RESIGN, THERE HAS NOT BEEN CONCERTED PARTY OR PUBLIC EFFORT THIS TIME TO CONVINCE BEN-AHARON TO CHANGE HIS MIND. IN PART THIS IS DUE TO PREOCCUPATION OF COUNTRY AND PARTY LEADERSHIP WITH MORE IMMEDIATE ISSUES FACING ISRAEL PLUS LIKELIHOOD THAT BEN-AHARON HAS LOST ACTIVE SUPPORT WITHIN HIS OWN AHDUT AVODAH FACTION OF LABOR PARTY.
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3. TIMING OF RESIGNATION WAS TRIGGERED BY CRITICAL REACTION OF PARTY COLLEAGUES TO BEN-AHARON'S REPORTED COMMENTS WHILE IN UNITED STATES CONCERNING GENERAL ARIK SHARON AND POLICIES OF SENIOR LABOR PARTY LEADERSHIP WHICH FAILED TO ACHIEVE PEACE WITH ARAB NEIGHBORS. RESIGNATION HOWEVER CULMINATES LONG-STANDING FEUD BETWEEN BEN-AHARON AND LABOR PARTY LEADERSHIP OVER HIS CRITICISM OF GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POLICIES. IT REFLECTS BREAKING POINT IN HIS INABILITY TO WORK IN MINIMUM CONDITION OF HARMONY WITH SENIOR COLLEAGUES IN HISTADRUT AND THE LABOR PARTY.

4. COMMENT: REASON FOR BEN-AHARON'S RESIGNATION MAY GO DEEPER THAN CHARGES CITED IN HIS LETTER OF RESIGNATION. PRIOR TO "YOM KIPPUR WAR," IT WAS GENERAL CONSENSUS THAT BEN-AHARON WOULD MAKE BID TO CONTINUE IN SECOND TERM OF OFFICE AS HISTADRUT GENERAL SECRETARY, AND THAT LABOR PARTY, DESPITE HIS CRITICISM ON DOMESTIC ISSUES, WOULD ACCEDE TO HIS WISHES. SINCE WAR BEGAN BEN-AHARON HAS EXPRESSED TO CLOSE COLLEAGUES, AS WELL AS TO REPORTING OFFICER, HIS SHARP CRITICISM OF GOVERNMENT POLICY TOWARD ARAB NEIGHBORS, WHICH HE BELIEVED LED TO EGYPTIAN ATTACK, AND TO OBSESSION BY TOP LABOR PARTY LEADERSHIP WITH TERRITORIES. GREATLY DEPRESSED BY WAR, AND IN DISAGREEMENT WITH HIS AHDUT AVODAH COLLEAGUES, NOTABLY MINISTER ISRAEL GALILI, HE LIKELY CONCLUDED THAT HE COULD NOT IN GOOD FAITH CONTINUE AS HISTADRUT GENERAL SECRETARY. NO LONGER CONSTRAINED BY HIS OFFICIAL POSITION, HE MAY FEEL FREE TO CAMPION HIS VIEWS ON VITAL ISSUE OF PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST. WHILE SOME OBSERVERS EXPECT HIM TO ASSUME LEADERSHIP ROLE AMONG THE DOVES, LOSS OF HIS PUBLIC PLATFORM AS GENERAL SECRETARY OF HISTADRUT AND EROSION OF HIS POSITION IN AHDUT AVODAH IN OUR VIEW WILL SERIOUSLY DIMINISH HIS INFLUENCE, DESPITE CONTINUED MEMEBERSHIP IN NEXT KNESSET.

5. BEN-AHARON'S RESIGNATION PAVES WAY FOR LABOR PARTY TO INSTALL LESS CONTROVERSIAL PERSON AS,EXT HISTADRUT GENERAL SECRETARY FOLLOWING MARCH 1974 HISTADRUT CONVENTION. DEPUTY GENERAL SECREATRY YERUHAM MESHEL WILL BE STRONG CANDIDATE, ALTHOUGH MOST HISTADRUT LEADERS BELIEVE HE WILL NOT PROVIDE EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP. IN VIEW IMPORTANCE OF TOP HISTADRUT POSITION, AND NEED FOR STRONG LEADERSHIP, LABOR PARTY MAY CONSIDER DESIRA-
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BLILITY SHIFTING LABOR MINISTER JOSEF ALMOGI FROM POST AS MAYOR OF HAIFA, WHICH HE IS SLATED TO ASSUME FOLLOWING ELECTIONS, TO HEAD OF HISTADRUT.
KEATING

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